

# The Execution of an Insurgent Woman Conspirator by Spanish Soldiers.



## FRIGHTFUL SPANISH CRUELITIES IN CUBA

These Almost Incredible  
Horrors Were Witnessed  
Day by Day by a Special  
Journal Correspondent.

Santiago de Cuba, March 1, via Ward Line Steamer.—Starting from Havana six weeks ago, I have just reached this city after a long and hazardous journey, mostly on horseback, along the southern coast of Cuba, my mind filled with the scenes of horror which I have witnessed in the towns and villages along my route.

On the way I have visited, in addition to smaller places, the important cities of Matanzas, Puerto Principe, Holguin and Guantánamo. Accustomed as I have been to scenes of bloodshed and torture since the outbreak of the present revolution, nevertheless have I been horrified by what I have seen and by the stories of Spanish outrages that have been poured into my ear in rapid succession.

### HE WAS OFFICIALLY MURDERED.

While I was in Guantánamo a woman was shot for conspiracy against the Government. Her first name was Teresa, but I was unable to learn her patronymic. She was a beautiful woman of not more than twenty-five years, the daughter of respectable members of the lower middle class, and the mother of two children. The trial by court-martial that was accorded to her gave her small chance for her life. She was practically convicted before she was arraigned. Her harsh judges condemned her to death without compassion upon her sex, age and beauty. She was only a daughter of the people, and, as such, of little consequence in their eyes. Had she been a patriot they would hardly have dared to impose sentence upon her. Even Martínez Campos stops at such things.

Fully realizing the horror of the scene about to be enacted, I went to see her execution, hoping that even at the last moment a reprieve might come from the commander of the garrison. That my hope was groundless I might almost have known. No spark of pity ever fires the breast of a Spanish officer.

At 7 o'clock in the morning the procession of death was formed at the prison. Teresa appeared first, with her elbows bound together, walking with a slow, dignified step. She seemed almost majestic, alone as she was in the midst of a multitude, with the shadow of death upon her glorious face. The huge crowd was as silent as the grave, and the nervous strain they were undergoing was visible in the faces of all who beheld her.

Behind her marched a squad of six soldiers, and after them came the priest, who rode a horse, and was followed by a youth with a bell, which he rang at intervals. After the priest came a platoon of soldiers, numbering about twenty men, and commanded by a first lieutenant. In the rear of the platoon came the populace of the town.

The solemn procession moved slowly to the place of execution, just outside the rear wall of the cemetery. There it halted, and Teresa's lips moved in prayer. The priest administered the last sacrament to her, the entire multitude kneeling during the ceremony, and then they placed her about five feet from the wall and proceeded to blindfold her. She was made to kneel down with her back to the soldiers; the command to fire was given by the young lieutenant, and four rifle shots rang out upon the stillness.

The woman fell forward, her beautiful face grinding the sand in her death agony, her arms twitching until the elbows were bent deeply by the cord that bound them. She died in a few seconds, the first woman, so far as can be ascertained, officially murdered by the Spaniards since the beginning of the revolution.

The things which I have heard and seen would appear incredible even to me, if I did not have the evidence of unimpeachable witnesses as well as that of my own senses. Had I to rely upon the latter alone, I would begin to believe that I had been led in the grip of some horrible nightmare.

### Its atrocities committed by the Span-

iards in Cuba have already appealed to the entire civilized world, but the worst horrors of this war for independence are unknown to all who have not lived on the beautiful island since the beginning of the revolution. Most of the narratives sent from any part of the island have been carefully pruned by the spies and watchdogs of Martínez Campos and subsequently by those of Weyler, and the few that have escaped the minute surveillance of the two men last holding the rank of Captain-General have been meagre accounts of simple butcheries and burnings, the invariable features of warfare all over the globe.

Little or nothing has been said of the fiendish acts committed by the Spanish soldiers in the regions seldom visited by newspaper correspondents. The American and European papers have printed columns after columns of rumored manoeuvres, but have published none of the terrible details of the struggle in the interior and on the southern shore. This is not surprising, in view of the fact that correspondents have been practically shut off from communication with the scenes of the outrages and have been forced to content themselves with the cooked-up news doled out to them by the Spanish authorities.

Only my thorough knowledge of the country and my acquaintance with many of the leaders on both sides have enabled me to make this journey with comparative safety. Then, too, all whom I met were ignorant of my mission; if they had known that I was an American correspondent I would have been shot down like a dog by the first Spanish officer who learned the fact, or, at the very least, sent to join my unfortunate compatriots in the horrible dungeons of Ceuta, Fernando Po, Mahon or Isla de Pinos. As it was, I had many a close shave, on more than one occasion narrowly escaping detection and death.

I rode from Havana to San Juan de las Lagunas without finding any instances of Spanish brutality, excepting scores of deserted houses, which told of the hasty flight of those who feared they might be accused by Spanish spies of aiding the patriots in their noble efforts for freedom. The people of the towns of Guanabacoa, Calabazar and La Sierra were much alarmed by the prospect of bloody battles between the patriots and Spaniards within their boundaries, and dreaded the reported advance of the patriot armies headed by General Maximiliano Gómez and Brigadier-General Quintín Bandera. They were holding themselves in readiness for instant flight to the northward.

### PRISONERS TRAPPED AND THEN SHOT.

At San Juan de las Lagunas I found the middle of the cordon of Spanish troops which Martínez Campos vainly hoped would prevent the patriots from advancing more closely upon Havana. In the Spanish camp were hundreds of Cuban prisoners who were being transferred from Matanzas to Havana, because there was no longer room for them in the prisons of the former city. The prisoners were bound in couples with ropes that held their elbows tightly behind them.

Most of them were young men of the upper classes. Among them were lawyers, physicians, bankers and landholders. The medical profession was particularly well represented. Some of them I recognized as the sons of millionaires. More than a dozen of them looked like Americans, but I was unable to find out whether they were or not, as they were not allowed to talk to me—in fact, it was dangerous for me to approach them.

The prisoners were ragged, dirty and half-starved. Some were barefooted; others wore slippers, canvas shoes with rope soles. Many of them already showed symptoms of various diseases. There was not a man of sound appearance among the lot.

Soon after daybreak on the morning following my arrival, the prisoners were assembled for the march. They were guarded by two companies under the command of Major Condines. Half an hour after their departure I rode off along another path,

which, a few miles further, cut into the road they had taken. After riding for about two hours at the slow pace made necessary by the heavy mud, I heard a few hundred yards to my right the command:

"Alto!" ("Halt!")

Tying my horse to a coconut tree, I crept up to the edge of the field of sugar cane beyond which the column had stopped, and peering between the stalks without being seen, I saw the prisoners strolling by twos about the little clearing. Apparently the guards had relaxed their vigilance, for a few of the prisoners were allowed to wander out of their sight, and soon about twelve of them had disappeared into the pine grove on the further side of the opening.

But the carelessness of the guards was only assumed. It was not without design that the seemingly favored few of the prisoners were allowed such unwanted liberty. Ten minutes after the disappearance of the doomed dozen I heard shots and shrieks of agony, followed by brutal laughter. A few minutes later fifteen or twenty soldiers came sneaking back to the clearing with evil grins on their already hideous faces.

When the column had moved on again I entered the grove and found that my suspicions of the Spaniards' treachery were correct. There, lying in couples only five or six feet apart, were the luckless prisoners, who had been shot down in cold blood by the hirelings of Martínez Campos. Ten of the twelve I recognized as officers of the patriot army, men whom I had seen fighting bravely in the bloody battles of Auras and Los Hornos. They had been murdered in cold blood merely on account of their rank. That is one of the ways in which Spain reduces the congestion of her prisons.

### PRISONERS BUTCHERED BY GUARDS.

Pushing further into the interior of the jurisdiction of Las Villas, toward Matanzas, I found more evidences of the frequent murders of Cuban prisoners by Spanish guards. Stories too revolting for publication were told to me by peasants whom I met on the road, and who, in fear and trembling, had witnessed the butchery from their hiding places in woods and canebrakes. In every instance the slaughter was committed deliberately, without even the poor excuse that the prisoners were trying to escape.

At a hamlet called Ramonita a company of Spanish soldiers, as I rode up, was looting the four stores the place contained. What they could not carry away with them they threw into the middle of the road. The shopkeepers were begging them at least to leave what they did not want, but the soldiers laughed at them and persisted in their usual course of either taking or destroying everything.

### BRAINED A BABY AND BAYONETED ITS MOTHER.

In a house a few yards from the shops lived the family of Quinones, the father and some of whose were away fighting in the patriot ranks. The eldest daughter, Senora Donatila, whose husband was also in the Cuban army, was standing on the doorstep with her youngest child in her arms. A Spanish soldier went up to her, and, with a volley of oaths, said:

"Que es eso que tiene en los brazos—un mambisazo?" ("What is that you have in your arms—a little rebel?")

Then, with his bayonet, he tossed the infant across the road, dashing out its brains on the opposite wall. The next moment he transfixed the shrieking woman against the door of her father's house. An officer who watched the double murder laughed. I was obliged to sit on my horse without lifting a finger to save the mother and child, without even expressing my horror of the act. To have uttered a word would have meant instant death.

Everything was quiet at Matanzas when I reached it. There I stayed for two days, listening to tales of bloodshed told by travelers from Nuevitas and Holguin. The prisons were full of Cubans, and there were stories galore of midnight murders and mysterious disappearances, but there were no scenes of horror in the public streets. Women of the upper classes, especially those whose families were secretly affiliated with the Government, were not disturbed; but women and girls of the middle and lower classes, particularly those whose male relatives were known to be

fighting with the patriot armies, were openly insulted in broad daylight.

### BLINDFOLDED, THEN KILLED.

Wild excitement reigned in Puerto Principe over "El Sorteo de Muerte" ("The Draft of Death"), which was the newest method devised by the Spanish Government to reduce the overcrowding of its prisons. This consisted of the deliberate decimation of the Cuban prisoners by lot. Whenever the commander of the garrison decided that the prisoners were too full his officers forced the prisoners to draw lots to determine which of them should be shot to make room for newcomers. The drafting was done in gangs of ten, one man in each gang deciding his own death.

In every ten slips of paper was one on which was written "Fusilar," which means "to be shot." When the drafting had been concluded, all of the men who had drawn "Fusilar" slips in "El Sorteo de Muerte" were marched through the main street of the city under a historical mango tree that stands on the outskirts. There they were drawn up to be shot, and there I saw twenty-three of them killed just before I entered the town.

The oldest of the twenty-three victims was not more than forty years of age, and the youngest was a lad of seventeen. I knew some of them, but was unable to learn the names of those with whom I was not acquainted, as the soldiers would not allow them to communicate with anybody in the large crowd that followed the sad procession to witness the execution.

All of the prisoners were blindfolded and their hands tied behind their backs. They were made to turn their backs to the firing squads and kneel down. According to the Spanish law, four shots must be fired at each man, and, to prolong their agony, the prisoners were to be killed one at a time.

The first victim—a handsome young man of about twenty-five years—being ready for his doom, the word of command was given and four soldiers blazed away at him. A second later his brains were splattered against the enormous trunk of the mango tree.

### A CUBAN NATHAN HALE.

Another and yet another were similarly butchered, until the turn of the twenty-third and last was reached. He was a fair-haired boy of light complexion, plainly not a Cuban, but whether an American, Englishman or German it was impossible for me to determine. Not one word did he utter, but he would not allow the Spaniards to blindfold him nor to tie his hands, and every time they forced him to his knees he sprang erect. Neither would he turn his back upon the firing squad, but stood looking at his murderers with a steady gaze.

Just before the command to fire was given he folded his arms and laughed—a harsh, strained laugh, that grated upon the trag-

edy of the scene, yet was more tragic than any other feature of the execution. The soldiers seemed almost to hesitate, but they fired promptly enough at the word, and the boy fell forward on his face, gripping the grass in his dying convulsions.

So died Ryan, the Canadian, at Guantánamo shortly after the revolution was begun, with smiling defiance on his lips. Ryan was one of the first victims of Spanish tyranny in the present struggle. When they wanted him to turn his back upon the firing squad he laughed at them, and, in their own tongue, said to his murderers: "Nunca le he dado la espalda a un enemigo, y no lo pienso hacer ahora!" ("I have never turned my back to an enemy, and I don't propose to do so now!")

Ryan, too, refused positively to be blindfolded and would not kneel down. When everything was ready for the command he asked permission to speak to the officer. It was granted to him in consideration of his bravery. He gave the officer four little bags, each containing a Spanish ounce (\$17), one for each of the firing squad, and he said to the men:

"Eso es para que tomen buena sunderia." ("That is to make you take good aim.")

The words were hardly out of his mouth when his brains were splashed against the walls of the cemetery.

Holguin is about sixty miles from Gibara, and I travelled as far as Auras by train, sitting on my horse's back all the way. I left the train at Auras, and after riding around the now famous battleground, near the village, started at a quick trot over the first good road I had encountered during my journey.

### THE MOB'S REVENGE AT HOLGUIN.

There were more soldiers in Holguin than in any other city I visited, due to the fact that nearly all of the inhabitants are sympathizers with the Cuban cause. As I entered the city I passed a litter on which lay a wounded Cuban, whom six Spanish soldiers were taking to prison. The poor fellow was groaning piteously, and the soldiers were telling him to keep still.

A curious crowd of about fifty men and boys, manifestly all patriots, followed the litter and openly expressed their anger at the brutal remarks of the soldiers. They did not, however, attempt to rescue the prisoner until, just in front of a massive building known as "La Periquera," the corporal struck the prisoner on the head with the butt of his rifle, stunning him.

With a roar that made my horse spring sideways, and all but throw me under their feet, the mob rushed upon the soldiers like wild beasts, the light of madness in their eyes. Revolvers and janes (short clubs) were suddenly produced, and the citizens attacked the Spaniards savagely. Two of the six soldiers were killed be-

fore they had time to realize that their corporal's brutality had goaded the crowd to fury. The four others dropped the litter, wheeled and fired full into the faces of their assailants.

But that volley was their last. Another moment and the crowd had them, gripping their throats with the tenacity of a monster devilfish and dashing them to the ground, where they were trampled under foot until every one of them was reduced to a shapeless pulp.

Meanwhile the shots and shouts had been heard at the barracks, only three blocks away, and shortly afterward a company of soldiers turned the corner on the double-quick. Halting just long enough to fix their bayonets, they charged upon the crowd, expecting it to dissolve at the first touch of cold steel. Those soldiers were probably never more surprised in their lives, for the patriots, instead of flying, rushed to meet them half way, and a hand-to-hand fight followed, in which the soldiers got decidedly more than they had expected.

Driven back by the crowd, the soldiers retreated in disorder, but formed again and poured a volley of bullets into the crowd. More than a dozen of the patriots fell, but the crowd, which by this time had been doubled, dashed at the troops again and again, only to receive each time a deadly fire that mowed them down by scores.

### PATRIOTS WALKED IN TO DIE.

Fifteen minutes after the first charge two more companies arrived from the barracks and a troop of cavalry dashed around the other corner and charged the crowd in the rear. The patriots, caught fast in the jaws of death, met their fate bravely. At the end of the fight more than a hundred of them were dead or dying, and nearly as many more were captives. The prisoners were sentenced to death by a court martial two hours later, and butchered just as had been the twenty-three at Puerto Principe. They were shot against the rear wall of the barracks.

Leaving Holguin the next morning, I passed through the villages of Banes and Cayo Barro, where peace reigned for the time, and reached the seaport town of Baracoa three days later. There I learned that all who could afford to do so were leaving the city as rapidly as possible, embarking on the fruit steamers for New York, New Orleans and Mexico. The poorer people, having no money with which to pay their passage, were forced to remain, and as business was at a standstill they had no way of earning their living.

Consequently they had little to wear, less to eat, and many of them nowhere to sleep save in the streets. Most of the merchants and other wealthy men who remained in the city were doing all they

could to relieve the suffering of the masses, but so few of them were left, and there were so many unfortunates, that their aims were only a few drops in the bucket.

Women and children slept on the unpaved streets, huddling against the walls of the houses to shelter themselves from the chill sea breeze that sweeps the city by night. The Spanish sentries, as they patrolled their posts, stumbled over the sleeping children and woke them with vicious kicks, exclaiming:

"Despierten, berracos! Deberían estar durmiendo debajo del suelo, y no encima!" ("Wake up, you hogs! You should be sleeping under the ground, not on it!")

### SHOT AND THEN DISMEMBERED.

At El Buren, about four miles from Baracoa, lived the mayoral of Angel Toirac's coconut and banana plantation. One day, about a week before my arrival at Baracoa, his house was visited by a detachment of some twenty Spanish soldiers, who ordered him to kill and cook a pig for them. He did so, and after they had eaten the pig he started down the steep hill in front of the house to get them some water from the river. When he was half way down they deliberately fired upon him from above, shooting him in the back. He fell dead at the foot of the cliff. Not satisfied with this act of treachery, they went down the cliff and chopped his body into bits. Then they gathered the bloody fragments together and threw them at the foot of his aged mother, saying:

"¡Ah! tiene a su hijo; mire a ver si se ha lastimado." ("There is your son; see if he has been hurt.")

I went from Baracoa to Guantánamo by way of Las Cuchillas, a road running along the coast, most of the way over coral reefs. On reaching Guantánamo I was informed that the authorities were just sending a batch of captive patriots to Calumana, the seaport of the city, where they would ship the unfortunates on the gunboat El Indio for Puerto Rico, and ultimately, by way of Cadix, to Ceuta. The poor wretches were at the railroad station waiting for the train when I rode up.

Their wives and sisters and mothers and sweethearts were standing about ten yards away, unable to give their loved ones last embraces. I can say "last," because those who go to Ceuta seldom return. The soldiers would not allow them to approach the prisoners, though the women wept in a way that would have moved anybody save those human fiends in the uniform of Her Gracious Majesty María Christina, Queen Regent of Spain.

The horrible execution of the poor girl in Guantánamo I have already told about. It was a scene I can never forget.

Horried by this awful crime, I left Guantánamo within an hour after the execution, and went by train to Calumana, where I embarked for Santiago on the steamer Aviles, another Herrera liner. At this writing everything is serene in Santiago. But the dread of Weyler's arrival here has raised a feeling of uneasiness, though as yet the alarm is not general. It is the common belief, however, that Weyler will not wait long before pushing hostilities even as far eastward as this, and that when he reaches it the streets of Santiago will run red with blood.

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